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between the two, or between a father and his daughter, has often led to a divorce.

In the estimate of one good informant, when incest occurs within the family it is most often with an elder brother's wife, and less commonly with a son's wife or with the father's second wife when she is a man's stepmother. Mother/son, father/daughter and brother/sister relations are the rarest of all, if indeed they ever occur.

The above seven types of illicit relationship are listed in my informant's order, going from (*a*) the most common but least serious, to (*g*), the most uncommon and offensive. Despite the considerable amount of evidence collected on these various types, I was told by old people that it used to be thought a very bad thing for a husband to commit adultery, and if his wife or another person found out about it she would go to the village headman who would call a meeting of the council and then fine the guilty person: in adultery the man was always at fault.

Among Badagas the public attitude towards a cuckolded husband is that he is a foolish, weak and lazy man, for otherwise his wife could not have been led astray. However, his wife also loses all respect with the other village women, who may well fear that they could lose their own husbands to her too. Nor can the adulterous man expect any accolades for his behaviour. Today a case of adultery may go before a council, which can still fine the adulterer; or her husband may quietly divorce an adulterous wife; or he might give the adulterer a beating, provided he had some alternate explanation for it to offer his neighbours.

Attitudes towards extra-marital love and prostitution are clearly expressed in Badaga proverbs and legends. Witness the following still current proverbs: "Three things are equal to each other: a harlot, an adulterer, and a piece of ground which is always in danger of being washed away by a river" (Metz 1864: 97); "If the food is spoiled, the day is spoiled; if the wife is spoiled, one's life is spoiled;" "The immoral woman will not believe her own husband;" "The whoremonger will vanish away like a handful of wind" (Metz 1864: 98); and again, "Lust is deceitful, I have lost my blanket through it" (Metz 1864: 96). A few lines from an epic poem conjure up a vision of limbo that is worthy of Dante's *Inferno :*

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181 'Oh brother, who are these
539 Most wretched of them all?
831 In naked shame they're bound
548 To rugged gnarled trees.
They ever seem to talk,
But none are there to hear.'
'Oh sister, you surely have heard who these are:
Abandoned and profligate women, who wandered astray
From virtue and home. They have nothing wherewith
To cover their shame. They are hungry and cold.' (Gover 1871: 85).

In short, there was a touch of puritanism in Badaga oral literature that was apparently more honoured in the breach than in the observance.

The Consummation of Marriage

128 3.8. The early part of this chapter has summarized some of the kinds of sexual activity and instruction that precede marriage. It is now time to analyze the sexual behaviour that accompanies a wedding. In doing so we shall not consider the symbolic aspects of the [582] ceremony nor its sociological features; save only to mention that hamlets are exogamous, and the preferred bride is the daughter of one's father's sister, or otherwise a mother's brother's daughter is [615] almost equally acceptable. In the Toreya phratry alone marriage with a sister's daughter is permissible, though infrequent. An [582] ethnographic account of Badaga marriage may be found in Thurston (1909: 103-09).

583 In the nineteenth century a form of trial marriage was engaged in. 584 A young man might then approach a girl's parents, and if they liked him they would invite him to their house, where he would be feasted and allowed to sleep with the girl. In the morning she would express her opinion of the youth to her parents, and her mother would then signal to him the family's decision, by giving him a meal of curried meat or similarly rich fare if he was acceptable, or otherwise just some boiled rice with a watery vegetable relish. "The same freedom, however, that on the following morning is allowed to the female, is also allowed to the youth; and should any change have taken place in his inclinations, he walks away without further ceremony" (Hark-

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about to receive food, she brought a pot outside, left it on the ground, and stepped back about five meters while the visitor poured her foodstuffs into the pot. This was in fact the usual way of giving food to untouchables in South India. As women did not expect very good food in the menstrual hut they tended to fill themselves up before leaving home: "The eye of the ox which has been ploughing is on the village; the eye of a woman just before menses is on the hearth." A more rambunctious proverb states: "The woman who has not eaten is like the one in the menstrual hut; the woman who does not fart is like summer"—summer being a rather uncomfortable period.

Adult Sexual Activity

3.15. Badaga society seems to be more tolerant of sexual escapades, whether within or beyond the bonds of marriage, than is usually recorded as the case in other Hindu communities. Thus a frustrated missionary reported: "Badaga women, who have not come much into contact with Christianity, freely express their disgust at the miserable condition of Christian women, who are bound to one husband only!" (Anonymous 1894: 547). A proverb still heard on the lips of Badaga men expresses their exasperation with womenfolk: "A passionate wife is as bad as a house that leaks" (Metz 1864: 94). Yet there is little of the double standard of morality that separates the sexes in orthodox Hindu and Muslim India. Badagas of both sexes enjoy coitus, a factor that is essential to procreation, for they believe that unless a couple are properly satisfied by the act the woman will not conceive. Ignorance of the physiological facts of paternity is evidenced from the belief expressed by older informants that, if either husband or wife is contemplating divorce and remarriage, then pregnancy cannot occur even though they still have intercourse. Nevertheless they do believe that a foetus grows out of the semen in the womb, and it is fed by blood coming from the mother's belly (10.13). In those situations where a couple are satisfied but no pregnancy ensues, it is assumed that some sin has been committed by either the couple or their ancestors.

Despite this emphasis on the pleasurable aspect of sex, much coitus is reported to occur for other reasons. When a couple have been working hard all day in the woods or fields they really feel the need for total rest throughout the night. Yet they may still have inter-

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753 [824] [831]

illness. Sexual over-exertion can similarly make a young man incapacitated (cf. 3.10).

(*h*) The odour that follows on an act of coitus, or the "bad wind" that emanates from a corpse, or from a childbirth, are widely held to be responsible for illness and even death in unweaned infants.

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(*i*) Some misfortunes, like bites, stings and burns, are caused by quite obvious external agents. What we would consider equally obvious cases of infection, however, may be considered by Badagas to have a more complicated causation; as in the reported case of a woman with

753 164 797

> an extensive ulceration from the right arm pit to the right shoulder and to the right breast. It was full of black-headed maggots .... It seems she had been in this state for one and a half months in the village ... The rest of the crowd made most unkind remarks at her expense. Some said that it was on account of her bad life in a previous birth that she had to suffer thus. Her husband's brother said that I must either cure her soon or put her to a painless end .... I sprinkled into the deep ulcerated tissue a small quantity of chloro form, and the maggots fell dead in hundreds .... There followed an uneventful recovery ... (Ketti Medical Mission 1949: 4-5)

(The writer was of course an Indian doctor trained in scientific medicine.)

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(*j*) Depigmentation of the skin is caused by the supposed "bite of a blindworm."

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(*k*) Nowadays a "germ theory" is not unknown, as for example in the explanation offered me for why teeth rot. Cleanliness of body is strongly approved of today.

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(*l*) In the case of plague it is thought that mosquitoes carry the disease from rats to men. This modern-sounding but inaccurate theory probably arose from the publicity that surrounded the mosquito eradication programme on the lower slopes some year ago.

[177] [539]

(*m*) And finally there is a belief that bad luck and illness tend to repeat themselves for an individual: as a proverb puts it, "The very foot which is scarred will be hurt again."